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## EDITORIALS

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### HEREDITY AS A FACTOR IN PRODUCING THE CRIMINAL.

Elsewhere in this issue there appears the list of subjects that were discussed in a remarkable symposium on the Bases of Crime at the thirty-eighth annual meeting of the American Academy of Medicine in Minneapolis last June. Each paper was of unusual interest and value. With no desire to disparage any feature of the program it may be asserted that the report on "Heredity as a Factor in Criminality, A Study of the Findings in About a Thousand Cases," reached the high water mark. It was presented by Dr. Edith R. Spaulding, Resident Physician at the Reformatory for Women, South Framingham, Mass., and Dr. William Healy, Director of the Psychopathic Institute, Chicago. It represented intensive research and the results reported are of far-reaching value for a theory of the criminal. Up to date it is the most extensive and intensive study of its kind. This report, together with all others that enter into the symposium, will be published in the *Bulletin* of the American Academy of Medicine, and some of them also in the *Medical Review of Reviews*.

The problem of heredity in criminality as in other connections, cannot be investigated until other causative factors, such as developmental and environmental conditions, have been eliminated. This has been accomplished in the work of Drs. Spaulding and Healy, and the outcome of the investigation is that it is yet to be proven that there is a direct inheritance of criminality *per se*. There is, however, inheritance of predispositions which are responsible for delinquency and crime in succeeding generations. These predispositions are mental or physical, or both. Feeble-mindedness, psychoses, hysteria, epileptic states and temperament, general physical characteristics, results of specific diseases, etc., may be inherited, and through them inheritance may be an indirect factor in the making of the criminal. Some of these points are demonstrated in the family charts of twelve juvenile delinquents. The charts were presented in connection with the discussion of the report.

The general conclusions that follow from this investigation are interesting in connection with Mr. Boston's paper in the present issue of this JOURNAL.

Acknowledgment is due to the American Academy of Medicine for having arranged such a comprehensive symposium for their annual

## JUVENILE DELINQUENTS AND MENTAL TESTS

meeting. Each effort at co-operation in thought and act among physicians and others who deal with the problems that the criminal presents represents a step forward.

ROBERT H. GAULT.

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### JUVENILE DELINQUENTS AND MENTAL TESTS.

The earnest discussion of mental tests for juvenile delinquents by members of the National Conference of Charities and Correction, who recently met in Seattle, suggests what seems to the writer to be an important point. There are certain fields of observation in which the phenomena are of such a nature—or the connections among them are apparently so variable—that they are not readily reducible to formulæ. This is true of sociological and psychological phenomena whether normal or pathological. It is different in the case of the exact sciences in which phenomena occur in connections that are, to a high degree, invariable, and that may be expressed by formulæ. At the best, no doubt, many a day will come and go before human motives and their expression in psychological and sociological phenomena can be stated in the form of an equation. Standardized tests involve practically such a statement. Until they are available the tyro who has had little experience in dealing with individual cases cannot, at a single trial, supply a reliable report upon the place of an individual on the scale of intelligence. In order that reports of high merit may be secured we must go to men or women of wide experience. The dissatisfaction with mental tests as means of diagnosis is traceable to the fact that what the lay mind recognizes as palpable errors are often made by half-trained “investigators,” “research directors,” and even by men and women whose only qualification is that they have been “trained” for six weeks in a psychological clinic. If we accept this statement and agree upon the desirability of obtaining thorough mental diagnoses (and who disagrees?) we are ready to welcome the establishment, under competent guidance, of each new psychological clinic in our universities and municipalities where observers may enjoy *extended* opportunities under experts to acquire familiarity with all types of mental defect. This point, furthermore, is repeatedly borne in upon the writer through his experience with students: that the efficient practitioner in the field of mental tests must have considerably more than a mere smattering of knowledge concerning the psychology of normal individuals.

ROBERT H. GAULT.